

## Against the Grain

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# Building Library Collections in the 21st Century -- It's 1066 All Over Again; The eBook Invaders Have Won.

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# Building Library Collections in the 21st Century — It's 1066 All Over Again; The eBook Invaders Have Won.

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I know what you are thinking — another article about eBooks. However, the change is cataclysmic and the virtual end is in sight. Yes, there are still a lot of print books and my library will still purchase them. There are still disciplines which rely on print books and they may never entirely change, however I can see the time when they will be a small minority, like books of poetry have become.

There still remains the issue of reading an entire book cover to cover as an eBook. However, as we now see, people will read an entire book online. The rapid success of **Kindles** and **Nooks** prove that.

However, at my university, History, Art History, and English need print editions of most of their books. History books are not read and studied a chapter here and a chapter there. Fiction isn't. Books of criticism, however, are used a great deal by individual chapters, by many students. Art History books have a special problem. They are often read cover to cover, but the big problem are art reproductions, which are limited to the capacity of a computer which simply isn't as exacting or large as the print format can be.

Books still have a lot of other positive value, for scholars especially. Notes are hard to use with the text. I have a feeling that advances will address a lot of these issues. Some have already. Cooperative collection development can really make a dent here with print not being on the shelf of every library of a consortium. Reading a book cover to cover will still be important to many, but print-on-demand will probably be another solution to the diminishing need for printed books. Those books may be quite expensive and may price themselves out of the library market.

There was the recent news of university presses banding together to offer eBooks of their titles. **JSTOR**, which is the mother lode resource for humanists, will publish eBooks. The heavy hitters of the humanities, **Cambridge** and **Oxford University** press are offered as eBooks. There are a plethora of other

university press individual eBook platforms. The university press publishers are scrambling to stay afloat and are grabbing at eBooks, which they see as cost-efficient as well as the only way to survive, and they are what people want to buy. These publishers have been on their deathbed but may arise again. Metaphorically, they are jumping on the refrigerator bandwagon, instead of becoming like the horse-driven ice wagons of yore.

The sad development I see is still the burgeoning individual university press eBook platforms. Maybe many of their eBooks, which are available through a number of aggregators, now will go to their individual platforms, which will be a nightmare for acquisitions librarians. Hopefully they will take the path of the ejournals, which are mostly available through vendors. With acquisitions departments shrinking and the trend of the field to doing less with less, dealing with individual publishers is not the way to go. I would think libraries make up the biggest share of the profit of university presses and if libraries are going increasingly to some degree to patron-driven acquisitions, individual suppliers just won't work.

Interestingly this turning the corner in the change in primary format is coming at the same time as the lack of shelf space in libraries and the trend to use what space there is for other functions. There is a great trend towards creating student collaborative research space, with students and faculty to use in more innovative ways. The library space is changing to being an attractive place and a magnet for students instead of just lots of shelves. Libraries just have

so much in their budgets to house or store large collections of books, a lot of which are not used. Interestingly, there is a sustainability issue here as well. Fewer print books mean fewer trees taken from the ecosystem.

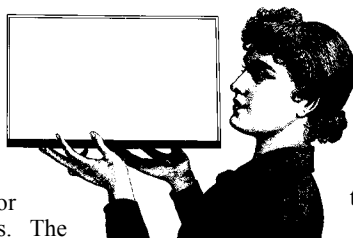
The new developments in eBooks, particularly the embracing of them by all segments of society, will drive lightning speed adoption of them in

libraries, fund allocations for them outstripping print funding. An article on February 4th in the *New York Times* by **Julie Bosman** is about the number of teens and young adults who received eBook readers as Christmas gifts. They have already been using them tremendously, downloading library eBooks, buying eBooks, and even using eBooks of older works in the public domain. They have driven up the use of eBooks by this segment of eBook purchasers from 6 percent to 20 percent. Low and behold, by anecdotal evidence, they watch less TV and read more. This is a very positive outcome for those who already embrace the value of books, we librarians. These teens and young adults will very soon enter our universities and will bring their **Kindles**, **Nooks**, and **Sony**s with them. It is heartening to see that libraries should be ready for them with the burgeoning of materials becoming available for use by these eBook readers, and hand-held devices.

It is hard for the older group of librarians and established faculty to ride the wave of this development, being ahead of the curve rather than following it. We still have those big collections of books, which are still growing. Our resources and attention, however, are shifting rapidly to eBooks away from book books, or should be. One of the prime reasons librarians throughout history, and even today, go into librarianship is to encourage reading. If an electronic device becomes the primary delivery tool for this it is in our interest to be early adopters.

We, who have been in the field for a while, a great while in my case, have seen many sacred cows become gored oxen. The biggest changes have been the demise of the card catalog, the springing up of all the digital content there is, and remote access taking over from face-to-face librarian and student interaction. We have seen microfiche come and go, CD-ROMs rise and diminish, and bigger and bigger libraries not built to house bigger and bigger collections. Now we are seeing the heart of the library, its books, become spirits with no physical form. This is a change in libraries on the level of the invention of movable type by **Gutenberg**.

If I remember my library history right, there was a quite a hue and cry back in the 15th century when movable type printed books were replacing hand-written manuscripts as the predominant format for a book. The moan was about the unique qualities of individually written texts and their richness, as well as illustrations and distinctive handwriting of the copiers becoming a thing of the past. What happened, of course, was the opening up of reading and writing, and the dissemination of knowledge and ideas to the world beyond the monasteries and the nobility. It was as big a revolution in that time as computers are in ours and the inevitable growth of eBooks as the predominant format for books. 🌱



## Rumors from page 37

Oh! And I forgot the delightful **Joyce Dixon-Fyle** who is joining the **Charleston Conference** planning directors. Her profile and interview are in this issue, p.45 and p.46, and also on the **ATG News Channel**! <http://www.against-the-grain.com/>

And we have a great profile and picture of the handsome **Matt Hancox** (Gale Digital) in this issue, p.47, as well as on the **ATG News Channel**.

Speaking of which, have you visited the **ATG News Channel** recently? We have been trying out some new things like book of the week, article of the week, star of the week, topic of the week, etc., etc. If you have any suggestions or want to join the **News Channel working group**, please let me know!! <kstrauch@comcast.net>  
<http://www.against-the-grain.com/>

Guess who I heard from recently? **Jim Morrison** one of my favorite people in the whole world! Once with **University Microfilms** (remember them?) and

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